



SIMPLIFYING THE APPLICATION FOR STUDENT AID ACT

THE PROBLEM:

For many students and families, federal financial aid makes a postsecondary education possible. The time when a family begins the process of applying for financial aid is critical to ensuring students access the full range of assistance available to them. Unfortunately, the current process is not serving the best interests of students and families. A student's application process starts when he or she submits the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students who wish to enroll in fall classes are encouraged to begin applying for aid in January. However, the FAFSA relies on income tax data from the previous year that is not readily available at the time students should start filling out their applications.

This flawed process results in significant delays in the submission of FAFSA forms, which leaves financial aid administrators little time to put together aid packages for incoming students. More importantly, students do not learn in a timely manner what their financial aid packages will ultimately be, which makes it more difficult to plan for the cost of their education. Some students may even miss opportunities to receive state and institution-based aid as these limited resources are often awarded on a "first-come, first-served" basis. Further complicating matters is an overly complex FAFSA form. The current application runs 10 pages long and includes 108 questions on topics such as income, expenses, family size, and assets. Some families are so overwhelmed they fail to apply, which disqualifies students from aid they may otherwise be eligible to receive.

THE SOLUTION:

To streamline and improve the student aid application process, Reps. Joe Heck (R-NV), Phil Roe (R-TN), Jared Polis (D-CO), and Mark Pocan (D-WI) introduced the *Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act*. The bipartisan legislation will help students make timely financial decisions about their education.

H.R. 3177 – SIMPLIFYING THE APPLICATION FOR STUDENT AID ACT:

- Allows students to use family income data from two years prior to the date of the FAFSA application. This process will help students apply for financial aid earlier so they can better prepare for their college costs.
- Improves the ability to link between the online FAFSA form and income tax data stored by the Internal Revenue Service to automatically input income data into the FAFSA form, reducing the need to manually input information that often prevents low-income students from applying for aid.
- Strengthens the integrity of federal financial aid by providing institutions more time to verify the income of their students.

The *Simplifying the Application for Student Aid Act* will help students access the full range of federal financial aid to turn their dreams of a postsecondary education into reality.